

# EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN HOMILETIC MAGAZINE.

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VOL. IX.

OCTOBER, 1911.

No. 10.

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## Sermon on the Gospel for the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 14, 1—11.

Our Gospel deals with the Sabbath question. In our country there are two parties holding contrary views as to the Sabbath, and both parties are wrong. The first party is composed of nearly all the sects around us. Their great mistake is, that, without the least foundation of Scripture, and even contrary to the Scriptures, they claim that God has changed the day of worship and rest from Saturday to Sunday for the time of the New Testament, that it is a divine command to observe Sunday, the Lord's day, and that the commandment, "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy," is just as binding for the Christians in the New Testament as it was for the Jews in the Old Testament, only that God had changed the day from Saturday to Sunday in honor of Christ's resurrection. They claim that what God said to the Jews: "Six days shalt thou labor," etc., Exod. 20, 9. 10, applies to the Christians also, and that Sunday is the divinely appointed day of rest. The sin against the Third Commandment, to their minds, is to work on Sunday.

But where is this written? Not the slightest intimation can be found in the New Testament that God had made a change in the day. The change was made not by God, but by man. The apostles and early Christians at first assembled daily for prayer, and afterwards they met on Sunday, in commemoration of Christ's resurrection, on the first day of the week. This they did of their own free choice; for they might as well have taken Monday, or Tuesday, or any other day, not being bound by any divine command. And the change had nothing to do with the Sabbath as a day of rest. Christ had done away with the Jewish Sabbath, and Paul distinctly says in his epistle to the Colossians: "Let no man judge you," etc., Col. 2, 16. 17. Sunday, therefore, is not by divine command, but is a free institution of the Christian Church, that the Christians might

have a fixed day on which to assemble for divine worship; and the sectarians who clamor for the divine institution of Sunday as a day of rest are wrong.

The other party holding a wrong view as to the Sabbath are the Seventh Day Adventists and kindred sects. These claim that the Third Commandment of the Old Testament, both as to day and obligations, is still in force, and that the great sin of the age is, that the Christians do not rest and assemble for divine worship on Saturday. They ostentatiously wear old clothing on Sunday, and work on Sunday, and often find themselves arraigned before the courts for transgressing the Sunday law, and rest and meet for divine worship on Saturday. Though these Seventh Day Adventists are in a hopeless minority, they always get the best of their sectarian opponents in argumentation. When they say, Show us where God has changed the day, their opponents are outdone. The only denomination that can successfully cope with the Seventh Day Adventists is the Lutheran Church. For we Lutherans say, on Scriptural authority, that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath-day, that Christ has done away with the Jewish Sabbath, and that no day of rest is commanded in the New Testament.

Must we, then, strike the Third Commandment from the Decalogue? Verily not! The day of rest we may strike; for that was intended for the Jews only. But there is something in this commandment beside the day of rest, and that is, to sanctify, to keep holy; and this part of the commandment is just as binding for us Christians as it was for the Jews. As Luther puts it in the Catechism: "Which is the Third Commandment? Thou shalt sanctify the holy-day. What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we may not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred, and gladly hear and learn it."

Now, in our Gospel Jesus shows that two things are required of man that he might keep this commandment. Let us therefore consider, with the aid of God's Holy Spirit,

THE TWO THINGS REQUIRED OF MAN THAT HE MIGHT KEEP  
THE THIRD COMMANDMENT:

1. *A loving heart,*
2. *A humble mind.*

1.

We read: "And it came to pass . . . again to these things." Here the Pharisees had laid a trap for Jesus. One of the chief Pharisees had invited Him to his house on the Sabbath-day, and, at the same time, the Pharisees had a poor man come to the house who was sick with the dropsy. They knew how willing Jesus was to heal the sick, and expected Him to heal the sick man and thereby to break the Sabbath law. Silently they sit and watch the Lord



as the sick man comes into the house, ready to denounce Him the moment He would cure the man of his deadly disease. But they could not hide their evil thoughts from Jesus. He knew all. Answering, therefore, Jesus said to them, answering to their thoughts, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?" What shall they say? They are embarrassed. They find themselves exposed. Jesus informs them that they would certainly show mercy to a dumb brute, and pull an ox or an ass out of a pit, though it be Sabbath-day, and the conclusion which they had to draw therefrom was, that man certainly deserves the same and even greater attention than the brute, and that, above all things, a loving heart is required to keep the Sabbath commandment. "Love is the fulfilling of the Law."

Jesus Himself acts according to this principle. How could He let such an opportunity pass to do good to a poor, miserable wretch, He, whom our sinful misery, whereof illness is the consequence, has induced to come down to us from heaven, to live upon this earth, to die on the cross, and to obtain for us eternal life by His great work of redemption? How could He turn His back upon the sick man, and tell him to come on some other day for the sake of those evil-minded lawyers and Pharisees who considered it a sin to heal on the Sabbath-day? No; regardless of the day He heals the man and lets him go.

Behold, then, my friends, if you would keep the Third Commandment, you must, first of all, have a loving heart, a heart which is filled with love to God and to the neighbor. Now you know that, for the sake of order, we assemble on certain days, Sundays and church festivals, for divine worship, and you know that you are commanded to sanctify the holy-day, to hear the preaching of the divine Word, and to praise the Lord in the assembly of your fellow-Christians. If your heart be filled with love to God, can you despise preaching and His Word? Can you remain at home, or go away on some pleasure trip, and produce all sorts of lame excuses for not coming to church? Must not the love of God induce you to be a regular attendant at the house of the Lord and to say with the Psalmist, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honor dwelleth"? And if your heart is filled with the love of God, the love of the neighbor also will not be missing; "for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" It is not inconsistent with the spirit of the Third Commandment to perform works of charity or of necessity for the benefit of the neighbor on the Lord's day even during the time of the divine service. If you have an occupation which does not permit a regular attendance of the divine service on your part, come as often as you can as long as you are in such a calling. But do not remain in a calling which continually keeps you

away from the house of the Lord; for that would be detrimental to your soul. What God requires of you that you might keep His commandment is a truly loving heart, a heart cleansed with the blood of Jesus Christ, and thereby made willing to do that which is right in the sight of God and before the neighbor. If such is your heart, you will never be at a loss what to do that you may keep the Third Commandment.

## 2.

And a humble mind is required to keep the Third Commandment. This is the second part of our discourse.

We read: "And He put forth . . . shall be exalted." The sick man had been healed and dismissed, and the guests proceeded to take their seats at the table. But how unseemingly do these learned men, these doctors of the Law and guides of the people, behave themselves! One claims to be above the other in rank and title, and there is a general scramble for the "chief rooms," that is, for the first places at the table. It was a petty struggle for the sake of honor and distinction. From this unbecoming conduct of theirs the Lord takes occasion to tell them a parable and to give them a lesson on etiquette, and closes His discourse with the same general truth which we find at the end of the parable of the Pharisee and publican, who went up to the temple to pray: "For whosoever . . . shall be exalted."

Now we must not forget that this was on the Sabbath-day, and that the Lord had just shown them both by word and deed that a loving heart is required to keep the Third Commandment. Could they keep God's commandment while their hearts were filled with arrogance and pride, and while their minds were set on honor and esteem? Verily not! A humble mind is just as necessary to keep the Third Commandment as a loving heart.

Behold, then, my friend, if you would keep the Third Commandment, you must also have a humble mind. You must not think that to come to church on Sunday, and to hear the sermon, and to sing and pray in the assembly of your fellow-Christians were all that is necessary to keep the Third Commandment. You must not think that by such outward devotion you will merit something and earn for yourself a seat in heaven. If, for the sake of honor and reward, you attend the divine service, you are doing the very same thing which the lawyers and Pharisees did in our Gospel when they chose out the chief rooms. No; the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart God will not despise. You must have a humble mind and come before God thirsting for His salvation, or your outward service will be altogether worthless. When you hear the Law of God proclaimed to you, you must be so minded that you humble yourself before your divine Maker, and own and admit your own sinfulness with sorrow and deep remorse, and not blame the



preacher in your heart for saying things which do not suit the old man within you, or rejoice inwardly because the truth was told to others. When you hear the Gospel proclaimed, you must be so minded that you sincerely accept the salvation which is offered to you in Christ Jesus, who died on the cross for your sins, and not despise the blood of the Son of God by an attempt to work out your salvation by your own deeds, but perform these deeds in a spirit of thankfulness, as the fruit of faith. If with such a humble mind you attend the divine service, you will keep the Third Commandment.

Perhaps you will say, Alas! I find that I am wanting in both, in a loving heart and in a humble mind; I find that I am not keeping the Third Commandment as it should be kept. Let me tell you, my friend, that no man upon this earth keeps the commandments as they should be kept. But Christians will walk in holiness of life and strive to fulfill the commandments more and more, until they arrive at the place where sin is no more. Pray to God that He should create in you a clean heart and renew a right spirit within you, and He will increase in you a loving heart and a humble mind that you might do according to the Third Commandment. And as for your sins against this commandment, be assured that they shall not be laid to your charge if sincerely you believe in the Savior Jesus; for "the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin." Amen.

H. S.

## Sermon for Reformation Day.

ROM. 1, 17.

The 31st of October has always been celebrated by Lutherans as the birthday of their church. For it was on this day, in the year 1517, that Dr. Martin Luther nailed his memorable Ninety-Five Theses against the door of the Castle-Church at Wittenberg, Saxony, by which act, as it were, he declared war against the abominations and abuses that had gradually enslaved the Church of Christ during the preceding centuries. Here was begun the mighty fight between God's Word on one side and the powers of darkness on the other, which finally resulted in the victory of pure, Scriptural doctrine over human inventions and ordinances in the emancipation of God's people from spiritual bondage. So the followers of Luther have indeed good reason to celebrate the 31st day of October as a day of great joy and thanksgiving, because on this day the first stone was broken out of the walls of the great prison which kept the Church enclosed in seemingly hopeless captivity.

The Lutheran Church, I say, has good reason for rejoicing and thanksgiving on this day, for great, inexpressibly great, are the benefits and blessings we derived from the work once begun upon

this memorable day. This work of the Reformation has again given to the world the pure doctrine of God's holy Word, especially the doctrine of the justification of the sinner solely by faith in Christ, which before that time had been suppressed by the doctrine that man must work his salvation by his own works and penitence.

This doctrine, that man must himself atone for his sins by chastising his own body, and merit heaven by his good works and holy life, had also been instilled into the heart of Dr. Luther from the earliest days of his youth. And on his pious, though falsely instructed, mind this horrible doctrine had made a deep impression so that he labored hard to make himself worthy of heaven. I dare say that never a man tried harder than he did to live up to the rules and regulations of the Church, that nobody ever suffered greater pangs of conscience, or tormented his body more than Luther did. After having a long time tried in vain to satisfy his conscience, he was at last driven into a cloister, where he thought he could serve God better in a holy life of seclusion. But even here he did not find what he had expected to find, *viz.*, peace of conscience.

This peace of conscience which he had striven in vain to acquire by his own works and sufferings, he finally found in a place where he had least expected to find it. One day he was rummaging among the books in the library of his cloister at Erfurt, and there he found, linked to a chain, the copy of a Latin Bible, a book which he had never seen before. Eager as he was for knowledge, he opened it and began to read in it. And while thus running over its pages, his eye alighted on the words of the first chapter to the Romans: "The just shall live by faith." Like a flash of lightning these words penetrated the darkness of his heart, and the glorious truth now began to dawn upon him, that the peace of conscience which until then he had sought in vain to acquire by his own holy and virtuous life could be obtained without works, solely by faith. And the more he read in this book, the clearer the truth became to him, that the sinner is justified by faith, without any work whatsoever on his part, and in it he at last found peace and comfort.

This doctrine of justification by faith, which had made such a deep impression upon Luther's heart, very naturally formed the principal part of all his teaching, preaching, and writings in his later life. That was the bulwark behind which he calmly awaited the furious attacks of his enemies; that was the light by means of which he showed the world the way to heaven; that is the salt which seasons all his writings. Ah, my hearers, among all the great things that this great man has done the greatest is this, that he again found and delivered to the world pure and unadulterated the grand doctrine, that the just shall live by faith. That we may learn to appreciate this fully, let us now consider:



THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH, THE GREATEST  
BLESSING WE DERIVE FROM THE REFORMATION  
WROUGHT BY LUTHER.

I shall show you,

1. *Why this is the case, and*
2. *What this truth should incite us to do.*

1.

The pure doctrine of the sinner's justification by faith is the greatest blessing that Luther's reformation has wrought for us. For this doctrine is the principal and central doctrine of the whole Bible; it is the doctrine, as the old teachers express it, with which the Christian Church must stand and fall; it is the doctrine which alone can save the sinner, and without whose knowledge no man can go to heaven.

The doctrine of justification by faith is the principal and central doctrine of the whole Bible. Already in the Old Testament it is taught clearly and unmistakably. No sooner had man fallen than God, in the promise of the woman's seed that should bruise the head of the serpent, directed their attention to their future Savior by whom they and their race should be delivered from the power of the devil, in this manner clearly indicating that they could not do this by their own works, but needed somebody to do it for them; in short, that they must go to heaven through faith in the promised Savior. The same holds good in regard to the promise given to Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. For Paul especially mentions Abraham as a proof for the truth that we are justified by faith alone, when he says of him: "Abraham believed God, and that was counted unto him for righteousness." Yes, he calls him the "father of the faithful." This is, in fact, the purpose of all the promises and prophecies of the future Messiah, to show to the people of God in the old covenant that they could not go to heaven by their own deeds, by their fulfillment of the rules and regulations of the Law, but that they needed a Savior for this, that they must trust and hope in Him; in short, that they must be justified by faith in the coming Messiah. We might be tempted to look upon the hundredfold observances which the Mosaic Law imposed upon the people of Israel, the sacrifices, the washings and cleansings, abstinence from various kinds of food,—we might look upon these things as upon proofs that they were to be justified by their compliance with these regulations of the Law. But just the opposite is the case: all these observances were to show to Israel their incapability of working their own salvation; they were to be merely types and emblems of the great sacrifice by which their sins should be washed away in reality, and of the purification from sin that should be effected by the blood of God's own Son. Thus you

see that already in the Old Testament the doctrine of justification by faith is the principal and central doctrine.

In still greater luster and brightness this light shines forth in the New Testament. Christ Himself, who had come into this world to save sinners, teaches again and again that we can be justified and saved by faith in Him alone. "God so loved the world . . . that whosoever *believeth* in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved." "Verily, verily, I say unto you: he that *believeth* on me hath everlasting life." Who would dare to contradict such clear statements of our Savior as these? And how distinctly did the first teachers of the Christian Church immediately following Christ Himself, the holy apostles, teach that faith in Christ is the only thing necessary to be justified in the sight of God, and, consequently, to be saved! "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" was the anxious question of the prison-keeper at Philippi, and the brief reply of Paul and Silas was: "*Believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." Then, also, the various epistles of the apostles to their respective congregations are full of passages to this effect. Listen to Paul's testimony in our text: "The just shall live by *faith*." Listen to his still more clear-cut words in the 28th verse of the 3d chapter: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by *faith*, without the deeds of the Law." In the epistle to the Galatians: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the *faith* of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the Law; for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified." And again, in the epistle to the Ephesians: "By grace are ye saved, through *faith*, and that not of yourselves, it is the grace of God; not by works, lest any man should boast." Thus I could go on for hours, rehearsing passages that teach the justification and salvation of the sinner by faith. All the epistles of the apostles are full of them. Especially the epistles of Paul to the Romans and Galatians are mighty testimonials, which every Christian should read and study and ponder well. O my friends, anybody that reads the Scriptures and still dares deny that they teach justification alone and totally by faith in Christ Jesus must either be a fool or a base, malicious liar.

This point having been proved, that the doctrine of justification by faith is the principal and central doctrine of the whole Bible, the other two points, that together with this doctrine the Church stands and falls, and that only by the knowledge of this doctrine the sinner can be saved, are self-evident. In regard to the former let me only say this: This doctrine of justification by faith is eminently a Christian doctrine. It distinguishes the Christian religion from all others. All religions outside of the Christian religion teach justification by works, by sacrifices, by sufferings and sundry other performances.



Mohammed, Brahma, Confucius, and all the other heathen religions try to make man acceptable in the sight of their gods and take him to heaven by works, by their own holy and virtuous lives. Only the disciples of Christ do not depend upon themselves for their justification, but rest solely in the merits of their Redeemer. That is just why we are called Christians, because we believe in Christ as our Savior, and trust to go to heaven by faith in the blood that He shed for us. As soon as a man gives up this faith and begins to trust in himself, he ceases to be a Christian in the true sense of the word, and becomes a heathen. And as soon as a denomination begins to depart from this doctrine, and to teach a way to heaven by man's own works and virtues, it ceases in so far to be a Christian denomination, though it may still confess the Triune God and accept the Bible as its book of worship. The doctrine of justification by faith is the doctrine with which the Christian Church stands and falls.

Lastly, it is that doctrine without whose knowledge no sinner can be saved. If left to himself, a sinner will always try to go to heaven by his own deeds, which is clearly shown by the fact that all the religions that have not the Bible for their foundation direct man to this means of going to heaven. But alas! it is utterly vain and useless to try to work your own salvation. Not only does the Bible teach us that by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified, and that we are justified without the deeds of the Law, but even the voice of conscience within man tells him exactly the same. For the man who is trying to work his own way to heaven will always find that he can never satisfy his conscience, however hard he may labor to compensate for his transgressions and to please God. His conscience will nevertheless smite him; his dread of God's righteous judgment and punishment will never be banished. The only thing that will give him peace and comfort is the knowledge of justification by faith in Jesus Christ, his Savior. Ah, truly, my friends, this doctrine of justification by faith alone is able to give the sinner peace here on earth and, finally, to take him to heaven.

Oh, is not, then, this doctrine of justification by faith the greatest blessing which the Reformation of Luther has wrought for us? Undoubtedly it is. Let us consider, in the second place, what this should incite us to do.

## 2.

The first duty resulting from this fact is, that we should render God the praise due Him for this precious gift which He was pleased to grant us. For we are indeed indebted to Him for this gift, it being a free gift of His mercy, not at all deserved on our part, and as it is also a very precious gift, as we have seen, it certainly is our bounden duty to praise Him for it.

In the first place, it is a gift wholly undeserved by us. Indeed, the very opposite is the case. We are born sinners, and as such we

were naturally subject to God's wrath and punishment. Also to us apply the words of Paul: "Ye were by nature the children of wrath." So, instead of being worthy of God's grace, so that our worthiness would have prompted Him to send His Son into the world, that He might effect our justification and the cleansing from our sins, and to make known unto us this glorious truth, that we poor sinners can now be saved by merely accepting, through faith, what Christ has done for us, — instead of this we rather deserved to bear our own sins and their punishment, to be left groping in the darkness of our natural blindness, and, on account of these our sins, to taste eternal death. God would have merely dealt with us in accordance with divine justice if He had treated us thus. He did not owe us anything. On the contrary, we owe Him everything. Out of free grace He had not only created man into this life, but had even prepared an eternal home in heaven for him. Instead of thanking Him for it, however, man turned his back toward Him, rejected His love, and violated His justice. Oh, what incomprehensible grace of God to send us His Son and to make known unto us the salvation wrought for us by Him!

And do but consider a moment, my hearers: Why is it that God should grant to us, in preference to others, the pure knowledge of the doctrine of justification by faith? Why is it that thousands and millions of heathen are still without this knowledge which alone can save their souls? Why is it that so many thousands should see this light only dimly, half hidden by the mist of human opinion and teaching, while we Lutherans can view it in all its heavenly splendor and brightness? Oh, consider this question a moment, my hearers, and let it incite you humbly to bow your knees before God's unsearchable ways, and to praise Him heartily for His unmerited grace which condescended to grant you so great a blessing. Yes, indeed, let it arouse you to thank Him much and often, to thank Him every day of your lives, to thank Him for it with all your soul and heart. The gift is indeed worthy of it! Remember, if God had withheld this gift from you, if He had not acquainted you with the doctrine of justification by faith, you would be without peace and comfort here on earth, and in the world to come you would have been eternally miserable and unhappy! Now you are happy children of God, and after departing this life you will forever enter into heavenly bliss and glory! Oh, remember this, my hearers, and let your praises be in keeping with the gift!

The second duty that devolves upon us for being granted so precious a gift is that of accepting and preserving the same. What is a beggar profited if a rich man offers him a goodly sum of money that would suffice to put him into good circumstances, if, however, he rejects the present and keeps on walking about in his rags and



begging his food just as he had done before? Just so it would do us no good to have been offered justification and salvation freely, through faith in Christ, our Savior, by God, if we would scorn the offer, and willfully remain in our sins, and finally cast ourselves headlong into destruction. Oh, I beseech you therefore, my dear friends, do not receive the grace of God in vain! If you did, you would not only exclude yourselves from heaven, but you would also multiply your damnation. Your torments in hell would then be much greater than the punishment of those who had never heard of the way of salvation.

Be not only hearers of the Word therefore, but be ye doers of the same! Do not content yourselves with belonging outwardly to the Lutheran Church, the church of the Reformation, which has preserved pure and unadulterated the doctrine of justification by faith, but strive to be members of that one holy Christian Church which accepts this doctrine with the heart. God grant that we all belong to the just that shall live by faith! Amen. G. L.

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## Missionary Sermon on Eph. 2, 8. 9.

Published by special request of the Church Council of St. John's Lutheran Church, Catawba Co., N. C.

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One of the main causes why our dear Lutheran Church is looked upon with disfavor by the numerous Protestant denominations round about us, is the fact, that we most emphatically refuse to unite with them in their various and often even nefarious schemes and enterprises for the benefit of mission work; and for this reason we are accused and decried as exclusive, stubborn, narrow-minded, bigoted, etc. Aye, it is even hinted that we take this stand either because we thereby hope to gain some territorial or financial advantages, or because we strive to establish our own glory, rather than to aid in the upbuilding of the Church of Christ. Again and again we are told: We all have one Master, we are all working in the same vineyard, the Church of Christ, why, then, can we not work together and by united efforts bring about grander results in that important work of saving souls? If we all confess *one* Christ and *one* hope, why, then, not go out hand in hand, and raise the joyous cry of the Gospel among the nations of the world? Brethren in one faith ought to stand and work together harmoniously in that one great cause: the salvation of immortal souls!

But, my friends, right here lies the cause for our refusal to cooperate not only with the sects, but even with the majority of so-called Lutheran bodies throughout the world. The foregoing statement contains a cunning fallacy. If it were indeed true that we all serve one Master, all work in the same vineyard, all confess one Christ, one faith, one hope, then it were indeed a most grievous sin

if we refused to join in their mission work. But this is not the case. We confess an altogether different Christ, a different faith, a different hope, than do those whom we refuse the hand of fellowship. Therefore, since the premises are not true, it necessarily follows that the conclusion drawn from them—that we of right ought to work together—cannot be valid.

But I would even go a step further, and say that only the true Lutheran Church is able to do effectual soul-saving and God-pleasing mission work. And why? Because the true Lutheran Church alone has, confesses, and teaches the pure Scriptural doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ, without the deeds of the Law. It is this truth which I, with the help of God, propose to impress upon your hearts in the following discourse. For you are members of the true Lutheran Church of the Reformation, and if you fully realize that you, and you alone, have been entrusted with that balm which can heal the wounded soul, with that heavenly light which can lead the sinner to Christ, then, no doubt, you will be zealous to fulfill your high and noble calling as coworkers of Christ, and have a burning and prayerful heart and an open, ever-giving hand for that divine cause: the Lutheran mission work.

The question which I propose to answer from our text runs as follows:

WHY IS THE LUTHERAN DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION THE  
ONLY EFFICACIOUS MEANS OF SAVING SOULS IN MISSION  
WORK?

We learn from our text:

1. *Because it rejects and condemns all merits of man's own works, conduct, or disposition as sin, and effectually calls the sinner to repentance;*
2. *Because it proclaims the free grace of God in Christ, and effectually consoles the despairing heart.*

1.

What is the object of missionary work? Is it to bring modern civilization to the savages? Is it thus to instruct them in tilling the soil, melting the ores, working at the loom, and other useful arts? No, this is not the prime object, although it may be one of its effects. Neither do we send out missionaries because we wish to break the idols of the pagans, and instead thereof give them the idols of modern thought, called science.—And again, it is not our purpose, in establishing and supporting mission stations, to numerically increase the membership of our church. No, the true and only object of all mission work is, and ought to be, the saving of immortal souls, through faith in Christ Jesus. Wherever this is lost sight of, or even placed in the background, there the true aim of this work will not be reached.

But how can this be done? If a physician would successfully treat a patient, he will necessarily first make diligent inquiry concerning the condition of his patient and the nature of his disease. Now, what is the condition of those whom we are to heal and save through our missions? God tells us in His Word that all who are



still in their natural state, *i. e.*, all who are not regenerated to a new life in Christ, are "dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. 2, 1. That is to say, sin has so completely driven out the life which is of God, has so entirely corrupted the image of God, as to render man not only frail and weak, but as to cast him into the bonds of spiritual death. Man's understanding is darkened so much so as to make it not only impossible for him to receive the things of the Spirit of God, but they even appear to him as sheer foolishness, 1 Cor. 2, 14. His will is so utterly perverted and corrupted that natural man cannot, nay, he will not, obey the commandments of his God. As a corpse is unable to perform an action, even so natural man, being spiritually dead, cannot do those things which God, his Maker, asks of him. But this is not all. Although natural man is dead as to all good and God-pleasing works, yet he is ever active and diligent in the performance of those deeds which are contrary to the will of his God. (*Form. Conc.*, Sol. Decl., Art. II, § 24.) St. Paul describes this awful condition in the following words: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God; neither, indeed, can be," Rom. 7, 7. Through pride man fell from his God, rebelled against his Creator, became a bitter enemy of Him who had made him in His image. And as he now hates and despises God, so does he also despise and reject that way of salvation which God, prompted by infinite love, has ordained from eternity for the purpose of rescuing mankind from its awful doom. Pride still keeps man from humbling himself before his God. For although he may acknowledge the fact that he cannot find favor in the eyes of God unless he be reconciled unto Him, yet he would accomplish this tremendous work of reconciliation himself.

Some will hope to soothe the wrath of the insulted Majesty with the works of their hands, such as sacrifices, deeds of charity, fasting, praying, and the like. Others may confess that it is God who alone can begin that great work in their heart, but, say they, the final outcome of it will depend upon our conduct towards the means of grace. It is an act of our own if we decide to allow the Holy Ghost to accomplish the work of conversion in us. Therefore our salvation does not only depend on the grace of God, but also on our conduct; aye, we even hold the decision in our own hand. Still others will concede that this is not true, yet they glory in the thought that their natural disposition is such as to not only induce God to select them, but even to make it easy for Him to turn them towards the paths of righteousness. They have fallen, this they confess, but not quite so deep as to belong to those whom Scriptures describe as being "dead in trespasses and sins." In short, man in his natural state is a servant of sin, and yet he would glory in his own righteousness. How can he be saved? There is but one doctrine that can humble the proud and haughty heart and effectually call to repentance, and that is the Scriptural doctrine of the Lutheran Church concerning the justification of sinners.

Our text says: "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves . . . not of works, lest any man should boast." Here we are told that the sinner is saved, *i. e.*, justified "not of himself," "not of works," but by the free grace of God, through faith

in Christ. Our dear Lutheran Church, in the Fourth Article of the Augsburg Confession, expresses this fundamental doctrine in the following words: "Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own powers, merits, or works, but are justified freely for Christ's sake, through faith." And of this doctrine we claim that it is the only efficacious means of saving souls. In the first place, it humbles natural man by showing him that he has no powers whatever to work out his own salvation, since he is dead in sin. If he would trust or glory in his own strength, this doctrine convinces him of his utter helplessness, by not even acknowledging a sign of spiritual life in him, much less God-pleasing action. It cries with a loud voice: Man, thou art dead in sin and lost forever if thou be not raised from the dead by true repentance through the power of God! And should the self-righteous sinner, like the proud Pharisee, enumerate his imaginary good works to his God, then this doctrine shatters this ground for hope also by emphasizing that man is justified before God "not of works, lest any man should boast."

Again, if the sinner should rely upon his good conduct towards the means of grace, then this doctrine rejects this ground of hope, too; for it asserts that "it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure," Phil. 2, 13; that he cannot resolve to turn to God of his own strength; that faith is no result of human exertions, but a free gift of God. This is a humiliating doctrine, indeed, for proud and vain-glorying man. For it does not even concede that he of his own strength can say yes, when God approaches him with His heavenly gifts. It calls aloud: Humble thyself, sinner! Why wilt thou claim any merits for thyself in this great cause? Why wilt thou glory in thy filthy rags? Acknowledge that thou art poor, naked, filthy, sick, dead, aye, that thou art an enemy of thy God, and that it is but the power of God alone that can make thee, an unwilling, resisting rebel, a willing child of God by the Holy Ghost, through the sovereign power of His Word. Therefore bow low before thy God and pray with Jeremiah, the man of God: "Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord, my God," Jer. 31, 18.

But there are those who seek the cause of their salvation in their own natural disposition. They probably lead a moral life before men, and find no pleasure in the performance of outward crimes against the laws of State and society. Are they not a long step nearer to salvation than they who revel in lusts and vices like the swine? Reason and Methodism would say: Certainly! But the Scriptural doctrine of justification admits no such a thing. It knows of but two classes of men, namely, children of wrath and children of grace. Children of wrath are all men who have not been regenerated through faith in Christ; there is no exception. In the 14th Psalm God gives this description of mankind in its natural state: "They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." If all are in equal death, if all have equally gone aside, then there can be nothing in man which can induce God to select one before another. Thus, again, we see this doctrine destroys all strongholds and battlements of self-righteousness, and most emphatically pronounces the truth: either of grace alone, or not at



all! All glory belongs to God alone; He worketh beginning, middle, and end. Therefore bring nothing into the presence of your God but your sin. For "man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law."

Thus we have seen, my friends, the Lutheran doctrine of justification is the only means to effectually prick the bubble of man's vainglory, humble him before his God and call him to true repentance. For there can be no true repentance where pride and self-righteousness still hold possession of the heart.

## 2.

But, my friends, if we had nothing more to offer to those whom we seek to save through our mission work than the awful truth that man is dead in sin, helpless, sick, and filthy, that he is a child of wrath and a victim of hell, then, indeed, our task were a hopeless one, for it would drive the sinner to despair. But God be praised! this doctrine of justification contains the balm of Gilead wherewith the dying heart may be recalled to eternal life, that glad tidings of great joy which gladdens the sorrowing heart and gives strength to the failing soul. For it proclaims aloud the divine truth of free grace of God in Christ Jesus. And this is the second reason why it is the only efficacious means to save souls. Our text says: "*For by grace ye are saved through faith.*" Whenever the sinner is convinced of his hopeless and helpless condition; when he feels the curse of the Law and the fearful burden of his sins, then begins the real conflict, that terrible agony of the soul. It feels unless its sins are atoned, unless the wrath is soothed, unless the Law is fulfilled to the very letter, there can be no hope for life. And yet it is convinced of its own death; it feels there is no life, no strength to perform this tremendous task! Then the poor soul cries in despair as did the jailer of old, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Some of the sects would answer: Well, your salvation is rather problematic. Possibly you belong to the number of those whom God from eternity has decreed to be eternally damned to the glory of His justice. Or if the preacher be a Methodistic man, he may say: Pray, fight, fast, work hard to make yourself worthy of God's favor, and when you feel the sweetness of the Holy Ghost in your heart, then you may hope to be saved. Not so a Lutheran missionary. He will pronounce that unconditional apostolic absolution: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And if the penitent sinner should answer, "Oh, I believe, sir, I believe! May I now hope to be saved?" then he will say, You must not only hope to be saved, you are saved already. For although you have transgressed the Law, although you have merited eternal punishment, although you have rejected God and His Word, yet Christ has made good your shortcomings, He fulfilled the Law for you, He suffered the punishments which you ought to have endured; He again established peace between man and his Maker through His blood. Now, if you believe in Him, your Substitute, God looks upon you as though you had done all these things yourself. He imputes to you the merits and righteousness of Jesus, and pronounces the joyous sentence: "I find this man not guilty, for the sake of my dear Son in whom he believes."

But is not faith at least a requisite of man which is presupposed by our doctrine of justification? It is not. For mark this: Our text expressly states that faith is not "of ourselves," aye, it puts great emphasis on the statement that faith is "a gift of God." Now, if faith is a gift of God, then it cannot be an act or work of man which God asks of him as a condition before he receives him into grace. No, faith is the fruit, the consequence of God's eternal love and mercy. His love does not only prompt Him to prepare the precious gifts of life for us; no, it also induces Him to give unto us that hand wherewith we may receive these gifts. And this hand is faith.

Thus we see, this doctrine, on the one hand, makes impossible all boasting of man in the cause of his salvation; and, on the other hand, it consoles the poor despairing heart by proclaiming free grace to all who receive the merits of Christ through faith, that God-given hand. This message cheers the heart, drives away the gloomy clouds of despair, opens the gates of heaven, reveals the ever-loving heart of our heavenly Father, and gives strength to lead a new life. In short, it makes a Christian, a child of heaven. And this is the one great object of our mission work.

And now, my friends, one more word to you, and I shall have done. God in His love has honored you before many millions of other people. He has brought you to the true Lutheran Church, to the very fountain where your souls may be refreshed with the waters of life that ripple from the wounds of your Savior. You have the pure Word of God and His holy Sacraments. And, no doubt, that doctrine which you prize highest is the doctrine that you are justified by free grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. Now I would warn you: Be not unthankful for this gracious gift! Thank God with all your hearts that He has revealed His love to you; but do not forget to thank Him with your hands also. There are millions and millions of souls for whom Jesus shed His precious blood, but who have never yet heard the joyous message of God's forgiving grace in Christ. Aye,

From Greenland's icy mountains,  
From India's coral strand;  
Where Afric's sunny fountains  
Roll down their golden sand;  
From many an ancient river,  
From many a palmy plain,  
They call us to deliver  
Their land from error's chain!

My dear Lutheran, do you hear the piteous cry of your brethren held in the chains and dungeons of sin? Is your heart not moved with compassion when you hear their plaintive pleading for help? Can you harshly turn from your door those who are asking for the bread of life whilst your soul is fed with plenty? Ah, methinks I hear you say: God forbid, never! Good, in the name of your Savior, I take you by your word. Show that the profession of your mouth is true, by the gifts of your hand. And remember the word of your Savior: "Freely ye have received, freely give!"

God bless our mission work! Amen.

J. A. FRIEDRICH.